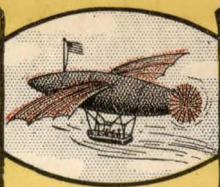


FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE,

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second-Class Entry at N. Y. Post-Office.

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NEW YORK, MAY 29, 1903.

Price 5 Cents.

FRANK READE, JR.'S -- SEARCH -- IN HIS LATEST AIR WONDER FOR A LOST MAN; *By "NOMAME."*



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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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NEW YORK, MAY 29, 1903.

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s Search for a Lost Man

IN HIS LATEST AIR WONDER.

By "NONAME."

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW AIR-SHIP.

Readestown, nestling down among the hills, is one of the prettiest towns in the Union. It is not only pretty, but the home of the distinguished young inventor, whose fame is world-wide, Frank Reade, Jr.

And Readestown was proud of Frank Reade, Jr.

An exciting report had gone forth within a few days, and this was to the effect that the young genius was busy upon his new invention.

This was in the shape of an air-ship with which he proposed to accomplish a long and wonderful aerial journey.

The problem of navigation of the air had at length been solved by this production which as yet the world had not seen.

Everything was kept very secret about the Reade machine shops, and no outsiders were permitted to view the air-ship. There were many good reasons why Frank was so strict about this.

A number of times dangerous cranks had endeavored to blow up or burn the shops, and several times they had nearly succeeded.

In order to guard against any such possibility all were barred. This Frank deemed the safest course.

In the young inventor's employ were two trusty men, one a negro as black as coal, who was called Pomp. The other was an Irishman named Barney O'Shea.

Barney and Pomp had accompanied Frank upon all his famous trips around the world. They were deeply devoted to their young master, who placed great dependence upon them.

They were genial, whole-souled fellows, and fond of pestering each other in a friendly way. They were ever up to some jolly lark or prank.

Barney was a skilled electrician and machinist, and Pomp was an experienced cook and mighty hunter. They were Frank's indispensable allies.

Upon the day upon which our story opens Readestown was all astir.

From far and near people had flocked to the town. It had the appearance of a gala day.

The truth was, the air-ship was upon the stocks in the big yard, all ready to make its flight.

A great store of provisions was aboard, and everything was in shipshape order.

All that was needed was the master hand at the electric keyboard.

Let us take a look at the wonderful air-ship as completed.

The Breeze, as it was called, was wonderfully constructed. First Frank had laid the lines of a stanch boat, and then built the hull of tough but thin aluminum.

This gave lightness and strength. There were bands of tough steel and small stays and thwarts of the same material to give it additional strength.

Beneath the hull was a framework with a set of four wheels.

This was so constructed that the Breeze could run upon the ground also if necessary.

So much for the hull of the air-ship.

The deck was composed of plates of aluminum, and in the center was one mast, which rose high in the air, and held a huge disc, over and above which were spokes connecting with a mighty revolving wheel or rotascope with huge blades of thin aluminum.

This revolving rotascope was possessed of tremendous power, and a few revolutions of it would send the Breeze instantly into higher altitude.

This constituted the elevating power of the air-ship.

The propelling force was vested in a huge propeller at the stern, the blades of which revolved swiftly.

Upon the bow of the Breeze was a ram of steel. An electric searchlight was arranged on the deck, so that a light could be thrown for full two miles.

This constitutes the exterior aspect of the air-ship. Now, with the reader's kind permission, we will take a look at the interior.

And here Frank's genius was most conspicuously shown.

The motive power of rotascope and propeller was furnished by a powerful set of electric engines.

These were of secret construction and the peculiar invention of Frank Reade, Jr.

The cabin of the Breeze was furnished richly, and there were appointments and equipments such as were suitable for a journey in wild countries.

With this altogether inadequate description of the wonderful air-ship, we will take the reader on to events which came in quick and thrilling order.

It was known that Frank Reade, Jr., with his air-ship, the Breeze, intended to take a trip of exploration through British North America.

There was a wonderful lake region extending even as far north as Alaska, which Frank believed would offer a wonderful field for adventure.

But little was known of this region save such reports as

were obtained from wandering Klamath Indians, or a few straggling white fur hunters.

There were boundless forests of giant redwoods, even outstripping those of California, mighty chains of rivers and lakes, and game of all kinds.

It was true that the climate was severe in winter, the season of summer being short.

But Frank believed that there would be plenty of time for him with his air-ship to accomplish all that he wished.

And the Breeze was upon the stays, all ready for the start, when an incident calculated to change the young inventor's plans somewhat occurred.

Barney and Pomp were engaged in transporting some scientific instruments aboard, when suddenly a queer-looking man appeared before them.

Who he was and where he had come from was a mystery. The yards were enclosed by high fences and the gate locked. Yet here was an intruder.

Pomp and Barney stared at him in literal astonishment. They saw that he was a man of medium height, dressed in a checked suit of loud pattern, and possessed of a peculiar, noiseless gliding manner, which reminded one of a shadow.

His face was pale, but keenly cut, with shrewd, piercing eyes. He wore a tuft of hair upon his chin, and his hat was pulled well down over his eyes.

"Golly fo' glory!" gasped Pomp. "Who de debbil a-yo'? Whar yo' come from, anyhow?"

"Begorra, howiver did yez git in here?" spluttered Barney. "Shure, it's a trespasser yez are!"

The stranger made a suitable and mysterious move with his hand, and in a hoarse whisper, said:

"'Sh! Don't let it get abroad. I am a detective!"

"A detective?" gasped Pomp.

"Yes. I am here upon a very important mission."

"The divil yez say!" exclaimed Barney. "Phwativer it?"

"'Sh! keep it dark. Are you sure there are no listeners about?"

He glanced about furtively, and Barney and Pomp did the same. The latter did not like the fellow's looks at all, but he would have said so, but he interjected:

"I must see your employer, Mr. Reade. Where is he?"

"Here I am," said a manly voice in the fellow's rear. The detective wheeled instantly.

Frank Reade, Jr., stood before him.

Instantly, as if he was an automaton, the detective pulled out a card and handed it to Frank.

The young inventor took it and glanced at the name upon it.

"Felix Sharp, detective."

"A detective!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise. "What can do for you, Mr. Sharp?"

The detective placed a finger upon his lips, looked about him in a startled manner, and said:

"Sh! There may be listening ears about."

"No," said Frank, positively; "there are none; you can speak safely here."

The detective glanced at Barney and Pomp.

"I must see you in private."

"Is that necessary?"

"Yes."

Frank made a signal to Barney and Pomp, and they at once left.

Then the young inventor said, coolly:

"Now, what is it?"

"I have come to see you upon a matter of grave importance," said Sharp, persuasively. "I know that you are a scholar and a gentleman, and a philanthropist as well."

"Come to the point," said Frank, tersely.

The detective's lynx eyes threw a sidelong glance at Frank.

"The little preamble I have used solely as a backing to my requests," he said. "As they are of a nature to appeal to a philanthropic mind, which I am sure yours is."

"Well?"

"I must first tell you a story."

The detective drew forth his note-book and continued:

"I have it thus entered. Ten years ago there dwelt in the city of Baltimore a happy family by the name of Preston."

"Arthur Preston was a man of high social standing and honor. His family consisted of a wife and a young son, at that time barely ten years old.

"The wife was beautiful, a former belle, and one who had found it hard to give up the allurements of a social life. Indeed, this was her mistake.

"Preston was pronouncedly a domestic man. He frowned upon his wife's follies, as he termed them. Among the coteries of gilded men who were counted among Mrs. Preston's friends was a man by the name of Philip Carr.

"Here was where the trouble began. Carr was a former suitor of Mrs. Preston's.

"His assiduous attentions made the husband jealous. The wife was a trifle indiscreet, a quarrel followed, and as the result Preston found Carr in the street and shot him down.

"Believing that he was guilty of murder, he then took his son Harry and fled. From that day to this he has never been heard from.

"Carr did not die, but recovered. Preston would have been exonerated socially but that he was missing. His wife to-day lives a broken-hearted, misanthropic life in Baltimore."

CHAPTER II.

THE FUGITIVE BALLOON.

Frank had listened with the deepest interest to this recital.

All came up to him like a vision of the past.

He said quietly:

"Your story is correct."

"What!" exclaimed Sharp. "You know the parties?"

"I knew them well. Arthur Preston was a warm friend of my father's. I am quite familiar with Mrs. Preston's troubles."

"Then perhaps this letter, given me by Mrs. Preston, will help to more fully explain matters to you."

The detective handed Frank a letter which bore the handwriting of a lady.

The young inventor broke the seal.

Thus he read:

DEAR MR. READE:—Your father was a warm friend of my husband's, and therefore I feel that perhaps I may have some small claim upon your sympathy, and am led to hope that you will aid me a little in the matter of which I will speak. You are no doubt aware of the great trouble which has weighed so heavily upon my mind for many years. Somewhere in this world I know that my husband and my son Henry are alive. That they would come back to me if they knew the truth I am sure.

The bearer of this, Mr. Felix Sharp, is a very trusty friend and a zealous worker in my behalf. For several years he has worked faithfully for me in trying to find my lost ones.

He has, he believes, a certain clew at last. He believes that my husband and Henry are at an out-of-the-way fur station, in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company in the wilds of Saskatchewan.

Learning that you were going thither with your air-ship, the inspiration seized me that I might hope to gain tidings from them through you. Therefore, I send Mr. Sharp to you. If you will kindly aid a wretched and sorrowing woman, I feel sure that your reward will be certain and great, for God will see to that. Please believe me,

Yours with deep solicitude,

MARY PRESTON.

Frank Reade, Jr., was silent for a moment after reading this peculiar epistle. Then he said:

"Mr. Sharp, I would be cruel to overlook the request of this unfortunate woman. You may at once wire her that I will do all in my power to help her."

"Good for you!" cried Sharp, eagerly. "You are a man of the right stamp. It will be an act of philanthropy and merey to reunite this family."

"I am aware of that."

"But——"

"What?"

"You are about to start for Athabasca?"

"Yes."

Sharp drew himself up. All the power of persuasion of which he was capable was in his voice as he said:

"I am employed by Mrs. Preston, and it will not only favor me, but her, if you will allow me to go with you on your air-ship."

The detective's manner, more than his words, impressed Frank. He was always averse to taking strangers aboard, but in the present case he hesitated.

He reflected that really it was no more than right that Sharp should be allowed to accompany him upon this new mission.

Moreover, the fellow was attractive, and would no doubt be pleasant company on the trip.

So the young inventor rejoined:

"Do you really mean that you would like to go upon this trip?"

"Do I?" gasped Sharp. "It is the dearest desire of my heart."

"It will be a perilous undertaking, and the results perhaps not altogether of the pleasantest. If you have any fear of unpleasant incidents——"

"Enough, Mr. Reade. I am not one easily disgruntled. You shall never hear a word of complaint from me."

Frank put forth his hand.

"Then that settles it," he declared. "You shall go. How soon can you be ready? I intended to sail within the hour, but I can put it off until to-morrow if——"

"Never!" cried the detective, forcefully. "I am a detective, and always ready. There shall be no delay. We will start now. I have no preparations to make. I will go just as I am."

To emphasize this statement the detective sprang on board the air-ship.

Frank was well pleased.

"Very well," he declared. "But you should send word to Mrs. Preston."

Sharp wrote a brief telegram, and it was delivered to one of the yard men. Then Frank went aboard the Breeze.

Barney was in the engine-room and Pomp was in the galley. Frank sprang into the pilot-house.

The workmen outside clewed up the air-ship's anchor and knocked away the stays. Frank pressed the electric lever.

There was a buzzing and whirring of the mighty rotoscope.

The fans flew like lightning, the air-ship rose like a huge bird and went upward toward the zenith.

Thousands of people below in the town were watching for the spectacle.

At once tremendous cheers rolled up and a lively demonstration followed. Holding the air-ship at a suitable elevation, Frank went out on deck.

He waved a flag from the rail and then dropped a time bomb from the deck which exploded in mid-air.

With which thrilling salute the Breeze sailed away to the northward.

Detective Sharp stood beside him on the deck of the air-ship as the city of Readestown faded from view.

"We are en route," he said, sententiously. "May good fortune go with us!"

"Amen to that," agreed Frank. "The best thing we can do is to try."

"If Arthur Preston and his son are in Athabasca we will find them."

"There is no doubt of it."

The Breeze made rapid speed to the northwest. The scene spread below was a wonderful one.

It was novel indeed to Felix Sharp, for this was his first voyage aboard an air-ship.

Therefore, the detective was more than ordinarily interested.

He hung over the rail for hours and studied the face of the country below.

Rivers, lakes and mountains passed in a kaleidoscope review. The air-ship kept on at a steady pace.

When nightfall came Frank said:

"We are more than two hundred miles on our way. At this rate we ought to reach the Athabasca Lake region in six days."

"Beggorra, sor, there's no reason at all why we should travel every night," said Barney.

"Of course," agreed Frank, "that shall be done."

All knew that with the electric searchlight this would be easy enough. It would simply necessitate the presence

Barney or Pomp in the pilot-house, a part of the night to each.

It was Barney's first watch that night.

Thus far no incident worthy of note had occurred. The air-ship was making rapid flight toward the Canadian border.

It was likely that at midnight the Breeze would be over Lake Michigan. This was making good progress.

Pomp turned in early so that he could relieve Barney at twelve o'clock; but for some reason the darky could not sleep.

Finally, after several ineffectual attempts, he arose and began to while away his time reading a newspaper which was somewhat out of date.

Barney on deck had kept a good watch. The searchlight showed a clear pathway ahead for many miles.

So there was no danger of the air-ship colliding with a mountain peak or any other elevated object.

Barney felt secure, for he knew that it would take all the night and part of the next day to get to Lake Michigan.

The Celt therefore did not remain in the pilot-house, but paced the deck for awhile.

It must have been nigh midnight, and he was longing for Pomp to appear and relieve him, when an exciting thing occurred.

A voice came to Barney's ears. It seemed to come from over his head.

"Help! Help! For the love of Heaven, give us help!"

"Help, is it?" shouted the Celt, looking upward. "Phwat the divil is that? Whoiver is afther askin' for help?"

Surely it was a strange thing at that mighty altitude and in midair to hear a human voice.

Barney knew that it came from none aboard the air-ship.

The sky was inky black, and he could see nothing against it. The Celt was a trifle superstitious, and a cool, crawling sensation began to come over him.

"Be me sowl, that's quare!" he muttered. "Howiver cud any wan be askin' for help up here?"

The Celt scratched his head, and began to work his way toward the pilot-house.

Could it be a supernatural voice?

Again it came, and seemingly from the very clouds above.

"Help! Help! Will no one give us help?"

"Bejabers!" shouted Barney, picking up courage, "I'll be afther seein' if it's a ghost or not."

He sprang to the searchlight and sent its rays up into the sky. Instantly a thrilling spectacle met his gaze.

There, floating in the zenith of blackness, was a huge

fugitive balloon. It was whirling along as chance had it in directly the course of the air-ship.

The basket held two occupants, a man and a woman.

They were clinging to the netting, and as Barney turned the searchlight upon them, the man shouted:

"Help us! for the love of God!"

"Shure an' I will!" cried Barney, his fears now dispelled. "Who the divil are yez, anyway?"

"We are lost in the air!" was the reply. "The balloon broke its moorings yesterday at the Chicago fair, and we are carried away in it. Who are you, and what sort of a balloon is that you have?"

"Shure, it's not a balloon," replied Barney; "it's an air-ship, an' belongs to Frank Reade, Jr."

"What! Is that the famous air-ship of Frank Reade, Jr.?" cried the fellow in surprise.

"Yis, sor," replied Barney.

"Then, thank Heaven! we are to be saved!" he cried in delight.

"Hould an to yersilves an' we'll thry it!" cried Barney.

"What shall I do?"

"Be afther kapin' still until yez see phwat I'll do."

The Celt at once caused the air-ship to rise to the same level with the balloon.

Then he sent it forward until the car of the balloon was alongside.

Barney caught hold of it and held it against the side of the Breeze. Then he cried:

"Jump out, both av yez, an' I'll hould an to the machine."

The Celt's motives were of the best, but his judgment failed.

He forgot that the balloon, relieved of such weight, would be lively, and he did not take care to keep clear of the dangling ropes.

The occupants of the balloon were on the edge of the basket.

The man picked the woman up in his arms and leaped down upon the air-ship's deck.

The result was most disastrous for Barney. Of course the balloon gave a leap upward.

The Celt could not let go, and was tangled in the ropes. Up he was carried a hundred feet above the air-ship.

"Howly murther!" he yelled. "Sthop the cratur! It is kilt I am!"

Indeed, it did seem as if the Celt's fate was sealed forever.

For as the balloon sprang upward the silk bag came in contact with one of the flanges of the rotascope, and was rent.

Instantly the gas began to pour out, and the balloon, with Barney clinging to the basket, shot downward into the utter blackness.

Down it went and out of sight; one of the ropes caught on the air-ship's rail.

But it snapped like thread.

Full two thousand feet in midair were they at the moment. It was horrible, indeed, to contemplate what must be the fate of Barney, for to fall such a distance must mean death.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEARCH FOR BARNEY.

The rescued man and woman were for an instant too appalled to speak or act.

Then the man recovered.

"My God!" he gasped, "the poor fellow has sacrificed himself for us, Emily!"

"Don't say that!" cried the woman, frantically. "Is there no one else here? Oh, John, find somebody."

The rescued balloonist sprang to the cabin door. He was just in time to meet Pomp, who had heard Barney's cry of distress.

"Golly fo' glory!" gasped the dorky. "Whereber yo' peoples come from? Who am yo'?"

"Never mind who we are," cried the balloonist. "My name is John Bertram, and this is my wife, Emily. We were in a balloon and your companion rescued us, but was himself carried away by our balloon. We must do something to save him."

Pomp was dumbfounded.

It required some seconds for him to fully grasp the situation.

Then he screamed:

"Massy sakes, dat I'ishman am killed! Marse Frank, fo' de Lor' sakes, cum quick!"

Pomp rushed into the pilot house and brought the propeller to a stop. Then he pressed an alarm gong.

This aroused everybody on board, and Frank and Felix Sharp, the detective, came rushing out of the cabin half-dressed.

"What's the matter?" cried Frank, in a half-dazed way.

It required some moments for John Bertram, the balloonist, to fully explain the matter to Frank Reade, Jr. The young inventor was horrified.

"My God!" he cried, "that is the end of Barney, I fear. We must search for his body!"

"Let us hope for the best," cried Bertram. "I am in deep distress that he should have lost his life for us!"

Frank rushed to the searchlight and depressed its rays.

He gave a thrilling cry as he did so.

"He has fallen into the waters of Lake Michigan!"

This seemed true enough.

Beneath them were the waters of the great lake. The searchlight swept the surface of the great body of water.

But nothing was seen of Barney or the balloon.

"They have doubtless gone to the bottom!" declared Felix Sharp.

"I think not," said Frank. "The balloon may not have sunk immediately, and may have floated miles away before falling into the water. Barney was a strong swimmer; we must not give up hope."

"Dat am right," Marse Frank!" cried Pomp, eagerly.

"I jes' beliebe dat I'ishman am alibe!"

"We will believe until we know the truth," declared the young inventor.

The air-ship was allowed to settle until almost upon the surface of the big lake.

Then the searchlight was sent in every direction.

Various objects were revealed upon the lake's surface. A large schooner loomed up a mile away. A small island was half a mile to the eastward, and what looked like a pile of wreckage lay upon the water not far from it.

"That is it!" cried Sharp, excitedly. "It is the remains of the balloon!"

Frank instantly started the air-ship toward it.

As the Breeze drew nearer it was seen beyond a doubt that the mass of wreckage was the balloon.

But there was no sign of a human being about it.

With the most intense anxiety all watched the wreck as the air-ship drew upon it.

Was Barney's corpse beneath it, smothered in the silken folds, or was he at the bottom of the lake?

This was a question which could only be answered upon investigation.

The air-ship was not brought to until close beside the pile of wreckage.

Then it was allowed to rest upon the surface of the lake, and an effort was made to pull aside the oiled silk, and if possible learn if Barney's body was there.

This was no slight task, and good progress was being made, when suddenly Pomp cried:

"Dar he am, Marse Frank! True as you am alibe, dar he am!"

The dorky pointed to the distant island, where there was visible a flickering star of light.

That it was a signal was certain, for it was waved excitedly about. At once it was concluded that Barney had gained a point of safety there, and was signaling them.

So the wreck of the balloon was abandoned, and the island was started for.

The air-ship quickly covered the intervening distance.

The electric searchlight showed up the shore as plain as day, and there upon the sands stood a man waving his arms wildly.

"It is Barney!" cried Frank, joyfully. "Thank God he is alive!"

It was indeed the Celt.

After whisking him from the deck of the air-ship, the balloon had sunk quite slowly. It reached the water lightly.

Barney, in his descent, had no idea as to where he should land, but when he saw water beneath him, he knew that it was extremely necessary to avoid getting under the heavy tangle of rope and silk.

So he leaped for the water before the balloon touched it and struck out to swim.

He was a powerful swimmer, and had no trouble in keeping himself afloat until the water beneath him suddenly became shallow.

To his surprise he found himself close upon the shores of an island.

"Begorra, that's luck!" he cried, joyfully. "Shure, I'm saved!"

Crawling ashore, he wrung the water from his garments and then began to devise some means of attracting the attention of his friends above.

The air-ship's light hovered about far above.

The Celt watched it and grew anxious.

"Phwat the divil will become av me if Misther Frank goes off an' leaves me here?" he reflected.

But he did not believe Frank would do this.

However, he hit upon an idea to attract the attention of the air-ship.

In his wet clothing he found a waterproof match-safe. Collecting some driftwood on the bluff he set fire to it.

And this was really the means of securing his deliverance, though this would have eventually come, for Frank would never have gone away without exploring the island.

Barney was quickly taken aboard.

It was a joyful moment, for all had feared the worst. The Celt and his friend Pomp fairly embraced each other.

"Shure, I'm a hard man to dhrown," declared Barney, with conviction. "It's not to be me death, I reckon."

"Golly, I'ish, I done beliebe yo' hab de libes ob a cat!" cried Pomp.

But now attention was turned to the new passengers—John Bertram and his bride.

His story was quickly told.

"We were to be married," he said, "and the manager of the Fair offered us a large sum to go up in his balloon and have the ceremony performed in midair.

"We agreed, and went up a thousand feet, the balloon being secured to the earth by a long rope.

"With us were Professor Vance, the aeronaut, and Reverend Ezekiel Foster. At the end of the rope, one thousand feet in the air, we were married.

"Then the balloon started to return to the earth. As Prof. Vance and Rev. Ezekiel stepped out, however, the balloon broke its fastenings and bounded into midair.

"Up we shot, and were blown away over the lake. We had no way of descending, for the water was beneath, and we have since drifted about aimlessly. This is the story!"

"Well," said Frank, after a pause, "you wish to get back to Chicago?"

"We do."

The young inventor took a turn up and down the deck.

"I can hardly afford to put back to Chicago," he said, finally.

"By no means," declared Bertram; "just put us ashore anywhere; we will find our way home."

"If I knew just where we were I could find some lake port near here and do that."

"Perhaps we had better wait till morning," suggested Sharp.

"I believe that is the best way," said Frank. "We will do it. The air-ship can rest on the shore of the island."

Accordingly the Breeze was allowed to drift over to the island shore, and a suitable place was found on the beach for spending the night.

The anchors were put out and the air-ship secured. Then a watch was set and all retired again to rest.

It was but a few hours from daylight, however, and therefore the period of rest was brief.

Daylight came and found all astir again. A good breakfast was indulged in, and then, as all went out on deck, Barney gave a cry.

"Begorra, there goes a foine steamer. P'raps it's afther goin' to Chicago."

"You are right," cried Frank, excitedly; "there is your chance, Bertram. We can put you aboard that steamer."

"That is agreeable," cried the balloonist, "if you can induce it to stop."

Barney at once ran up a signal, and it was answered by the steamer, which quickly hove to.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE NORTHWEST.

The steamer proved to be a regular packet bound for Chicago. It was no trouble whatever to put Bertram and his wife aboard.

They manifested their gratitude in the warmest terms, and then sailed away in the steamer.

The aerial voyagers were now free to go once again upon their journey to the northwest.

No time was lost in getting under way.

The morning was not far advanced when they went aboard, and the Breeze once more sprang into the air.

Up above the blue waters of the great lake she rose like a bird.

It was a magnificent scene which was now spread to view.

The mighty expanse of water glimmered and gleamed like silver in the sun. Upon its surface at various points were vessels of different kinds.

Islands dotted a part of the lake surface, and far away to the westward there was a dim coast line.

"Wisconsin!" said Felix Sharp. "We are not far from the coast——"

"And Milwaukee!" said Frank. "One of the most beautiful cities of the West."

"You are right!" agreed the detective. "I once worked upon a case there. I bagged my game and made a cool five thousand out of it."

The Breeze stood away to the north rapidly. Later in the day Barney, who was at the wheel, sighted a distant coast line.

"It is the Michigan Peninsula," declared Frank; "before morning we shall be over Lake Superior."

Darkness shut down over the flying air-ship, but still she did not abate her speed.

The searchlight made a wonderful pathway of radiance ahead, which she easily followed.

A cooling breeze blew across the deck, and it was grateful after the excessive heat of the day.

The voyagers all sat out under the cabin's projecting eaves and enjoyed the prospect immensely.

Detective Sharp gave some thrilling accounts of his varied experiences which were enjoyed by all.

Then Barney brought out his fiddle and Pomp his banjo. Both were artists in this line of music.

Barney played jigs and clogs while Pomp danced. The Celt also sang some beautiful ballads of Erin.

Then Pomp proceeded to evoke most wonderful music

from the banjo. He sang plantation melodies and otherwise contributed to the fun of entertainment.

None of the party ever forgot that beautiful evening as they passed from Lake Michigan to Lake Superior.

About midnight the waters of Lake Superior were beneath them, limpid, clear, and shining in the moonlight.

Barney was on deck then, and he set the course due north-west from Sault Ste. Marie.

The air-ship before morning had crossed the little strip of the Province of Ontario and was in a direct course for Manitoba.

Daylight broke again, and Pomp, whose watch was the latter half of the night, saw a wilderness spread to view far below.

The great Northwest was before them. What incidents were to transpire in the near future, and of a terrible thrilling sort, too, the explorers little dreamed.

Pomp went below and prepared the breakfast. Then he rang the electric gong, which apprised everybody of the fact.

None of the party but were willing to embrace the opportunity, and they hastened to respond.

The air-ship was now passing over a section of country which was as primeval in forest and as desolate in plain as could well be imagined.

It was that uninhabited strip between the upper end of Lake Superior and the settlements of Manitoba, and was as wild as most any part of British Columbia.

At the elevation of the air-ship, of course, an extended view could be had.

Far to the northwest was the mountains and divide, beyond which was the wonderful paradise of the hunter, Rupert's Land.

To the northwest was Manitoba, and beyond that the region of Athabasca, where it was believed that Arthur Preston had his hermit home.

After breakfast all went out on deck, and then occurred the first of the chapter of thrilling incidents which we have to depict.

The air-ship was perhaps a thousand feet in the air and sailing steadily along. Pomp was leaning against the forward rail, with some of the rigging ropes about him.

His back was turned to the panorama below. He was trying to solve a tangle in the mass of rope rigging.

Suddenly the darky without warning threw up his arms and gave a loud cry of pain.

Blood was seen to spurt over his face. Then over the rail he went and out of sight.

Frank Reade, Jr., let out a cry of horror. The detective Sharp fairly yelled:

"Good heavens! He is dead!"

"Begorra, it's kilt he is!" screamed Barney. "Some madhaun shot him. Shure, I heard the report of the gun mesilf."

"Do you mean that, Barney?" cried Frank.

"Shure an' I do that, sor."

Frank and the others, however, had reached the rail. The scene which they beheld below was enough to freeze the blood in their veins.

There, full fifty feet below, and dangling at the end of a single rope, was Pomp.

In going over the rail, the ducky's legs had become entangled in the rigging. This was his salvation.

There he hung senseless between heaven and earth.

It was a moment of terrible apprehension to all on board the Breeze.

At any moment Pomp might fall.

It would, of course, mean certain death.

Whoever had fired the cowardly shot could not be seen.

For a moment the voyagers were nonplused as to the action to take.

It was necessary to extricate Pomp from his position.

But just how to do this was a problem.

To reach over and attempt to haul him up might result in freeing him and precipitating him to the earth.

Frank hit upon an idea.

They had long passed the place where the would-be assassin had been stationed.

It was miles away. Frank therefore did not hesitate to act.

He sprang into the pilot-house and pressed the rotascope lever back.

The huge fan began to slow up in its revolutions and the boat to sink.

Down she went slowly but surely, and every moment Pomp was drawing nearer to the earth.

This action made by Frank Reade, Jr., was none too soon.

Pomp was not twenty feet above the tree tops when suddenly the rope disentangled, and he fell.

A cry of horror went up.

"My God! he has fallen!" cried Sharp. "That is the end of him!"

Down went the air-ship into the clearing among the trees.

As quickly as possible the anchors were thrown out, and when the voyagers leaped from the air-ship's deck and rushed to the spot where Pomp lay.

The ducky had gone crashing down through the branches

and struck the ground fortunately where there was a bed of soft moss.

Fortunately, also, the branches had broken his fall, so that no bones were broken.

But he lay there unconscious.

Blood was over his face and breast. Frank bent down over him.

His first move was to listen for the heart-beats of the unconscious man. A cry of joy escaped his lips.

"He lives!" he cried. "Thank God! he lives!"

A further examination showed that Pomp was not mortally wounded, either.

The bullet had cleft the scalp and passed along the bones of the skull, making concussion, but not a fatal wound.

Felix Sharp was something of a surgeon, and he proceeded at once to dress the wound.

Then restoratives were given Pomp, and he very speedily regained consciousness.

"Golly fo' glory!" he gasped, as he opened his eyes. "Wha' am happened? Whereber am dis chile?"

"You're on earth, thank the Lord!" cried the detective, "but it was a close call for you."

"Begorra, it's lucky yez are to be livin' in this beautiful worruld," cried Barney.

Pomp rolled his eyes, and then essayed to rise.

But he was a bit weak yet, and did not make much progress. He sank back, overcome.

"Don't over-exert yourself," cried Felix Sharp. "You aren't quite strong enough yet to do that. Keep cool, my lad."

"I think we had better carry him aboard the air-ship," said Frank.

"So do I."

"Give us a hand, Barney."

"Bejabers, that I will, sor."

And the wounded ducky was lifted bodily and carried aboard the Breeze.

He was soon snugly stowed away in his berth, where proper attendance was given.

Then Frank and Felix Sharp, for the first time, began to form conclusions in regard to the mysterious shooting.

"It is very queer," said Frank. "It may have been accidental shooting."

"Don't you believe it, sir," said the detective. "It is the work of some malicious scoundrel—perhaps a half-breed hunter, or a prowling savage."

"It was a mean trick."

"Of course it was."

"I would like to know who the scoundrel was. He would suffer for it."

A stay of some minutes was made in the vicinity after taking Pomp aboard. Then Frank said:

"I am going back a short distance to look for that scoundrel. I believe it will be possible to find him."

"I don't blame you, Frank," said Felix.

Accordingly the Breeze was turned upon a backward course.

The air-ship was suffered to fly but a few hundred feet above the tree tops. This afforded a good opportunity to study the country below.

Suddenly, as the air-ship floated above the tree tops, a break was seen upon the shores of a small lake.

Here was a number of wigwams, and in the reeds by the water were canoes. A score or more of savages were seen grouped by a mighty hemlock tree.

"That explains it," cried Frank. "There are the miscreants. We will interview them."

The savages seemed to regard the air-ship with terror and superstitious awe.

CHAPTER V.

SWEET REVENGE.

Frank felt very positive that the dastardly shot had been fired by one of the crew of savages.

They were undoubtedly Hurons, and probably hunting in the vicinity.

The air-ship began to settle down.

Suddenly they were observed to throw themselves upon their knees and lift up their hands supplicatingly.

"They are afraid of us!" cried Sharp; "evidently they think the air-ship is a supernatural visitor."

"It would be strange if they did not," declared Frank, "inasmuch as they have never seen anything of the kind before."

"Beggorra, I wish I knew which wan av thim shot the naygur!" cried Barney.

"Perhaps not any of them," declared Sharp.

"That is hardly likely," put in Frank.

However, it was the young inventor's determination to if possible learn. The air-ship settled rapidly down.

Now the Hurons threw themselves upon their faces in abject terror.

The squaws and children in a panic had hidden in the wigwams. It was really quite ludicrous.

"We've got them badly scared," cried Felix; "there is nothing to be afraid of."

"Not a thing."

The air-ship touched the ground. Frank went to the rear and shouted:

"Hello, Indian! We want to talk with you. Don't be afraid of us."

The chief of the band, apparently, lifted his head, but not his eyes, and replied in broken English:

"What wants Gitchie Manitou with the poor Injun? He heap good. No bad Injun here."

"I don't know about that," replied Frank, sternly; "did not one of you fire a rifle shot at us a while ago?"

At this the chief raised his eyes.

He looked straight at Frank, and the young inventor saw plainly enough that he was telling the truth.

"Injun no fire rifle at flying man. Him no got rifle."

Frank exchanged glances with Sharp, the detective.

"You have no rifle?" he asked, sharply; "do you mean that, Indian?"

"Oh, great Man of the Sky, Red Hawk tells the truth!" replied the chief, earnestly. "We have no fire-sticks. We can use only our bows and arrows."

"By the justice!" exclaimed Sharp, "if that is so, somebody else is guilty of that dirty trick."

"So it seems."

"Do you think we can believe this fellow?"

"I don't see why not."

Then Frank said to the chief:

"Get on your feet, all of you. Don't be afraid of us. We are only ordinary white men. Red Hawk, I want to talk with you."

The Indians scrambled to their feet. It was then seen that Red Hawk had apparently told the truth, for nothing in the shape of a rifle was to be seen about them.

Nor a pistol. Their only weapons seemed to be bows and arrows, and tomahawks and knives.

Evidently, then, the cowardly shot had not been fired by any of the Hurons.

After a time Frank persuaded Red Hawk to come nearer the air-ship, but the other Indians kept a respectful distance.

They were afraid of the man who could fly in the air and would not believe but that he was in league with the supernatural.

But Frank managed to converse with Red Hawk, and found him a very manly specimen of an Indian.

He told the truth implicitly, as Frank believed, and the young inventor was satisfied that the Hurons were innocent.

He learned that there was a camp of border ruffians some

miles further down the river, and at once fastened upon them as the guilty parties.

Frank tried to induce Red Hawk to come aboard the air-ship.

But the Indian would not do so.

He seemed to be afraid to put even a hand upon the flying ship, and as soon as possible got back to his comrades.

But Frank insisted upon making a few gifts. Then he took leave of the remnant of a once mighty tribe, the descendants of great Pontiac.

The Breeze lazily sailed over the tree tops again.

Frank turned her course southward.

"Going back, Frank?" asked Detective Sharp.

"I am going to give those border ruffians a lesson!" said Frank, sternly. "I don't believe they will fire any more random shots."

"Good for you!"

The young inventor was in earnest.

The Breeze quickly sped away over the tree tops.

The course of the river was easily followed, and Barney, who was on the lookout, suddenly shouted:

"Begorra, Misther Frank, there be the camp now!"

Sure enough, nestled down at the base of a wooded bluff was a collection of a cabin of logs.

A number of rough-looking men were seen lounging about. At first they apparently did not see the air-ship.

When they did a great shout went up from them.

Frank and Sharp were at the rail.

"Let the ship go down, Barney!" shouted the young inventor.

Barney had taken Frank's place in the wheel-house.

He now hastened to obey, and the Breeze began to settle down.

But as it did so, suddenly Sharp clutched Frank's arm.

"My God! Look out!" he gasped.

The detective dodged back just in time, but Frank felt tingling pain in his ear.

A few drops of blood trickled down as he staggered back.

A volley of rifle balls had come up from below. They had been vengefully sent, and Frank escaped by a miracle.

The wound to his ear was but a mere scratch, but it was a narrow escape.

The young inventor's face flushed angrily.

"They are a churlish set, are they not?" he said. "I think we can bring them to terms, though."

Frank stepped into the pilot-house, and from a locker took a small bulb. It was an electric bulb of his own invention.

He stepped to the rail again.

As he did so a second shower of bullets came up from below.

They rattled against the steel hull and through the fans of the rotascope, but did no damage.

Then Frank placed himself in such a position that he could see the border camp and yet not be exposed.

He saw the ruffians loading for another volley.

He shouted:

"Hello! down there! What are you shooting at us for?"

A volley of oaths came back, and then one of the ruffians shouted:

"Who in tarnation are ye?"

"We are American citizens and have done you no harm!"

replied Frank, sharply. "But you have opened fire upon us, and nearly killed one of our number."

A jeering laugh was the reply.

"Good enough for ye. What are ye doin' up thar?"

"Nothing to harm you," replied Frank. "I believe you are a set of scoundrels and murderers."

Again the jeering laugh.

"Wall, what are yer goin' to do about it?"

"I'm going to make you apologize."

"Haw, haw!"

"Will you do it?"

"Haow are yer goin' ter make us?"

"If you don't I'll blow you into perdition," replied Frank.

"Blow an' be hanged! We ain't afraid of ye. Come down outen that!"

Then there came another volley. Frank again narrowly missed being hit. He was now determined.

"I'll fix them!" he muttered.

He had no intention nor desire to kill any of the ruffianly crew; but he was anxious to teach them a lesson.

So he held the bomb directly over one of the cabins which he fancied was empty.

At just the right moment he dropped it.

It struck the roof of the cabin.

The effect was thrilling.

There was a terrific roar and a fearful lightning-like flash; then a great column of timber and dirt rose into the air.

When the dust had settled and the scene cleared, all that was left of the cabin was a hole in the ground.

The border ruffians were not possessed of enough hardihood to stand this.

They were seen flying in terror and dismay to the woods. Frank could have killed every one of them.

It might have been a mercy to rid the world of such a murderous crew, but he did not desire to do it.

It was his purpose to give them such punishment as they would not soon forget. This would satisfy him.

So he proceeded to drop bombs upon the cabins, and destroy one after another.

In a short while nothing was left of the camp but a literal hole in the ground.

It was completely destroyed. This was no small damage to the ruffianly crew.

Of course all their supplies went up at the same time.

"I think that has taught them a good lesson," declared Frank, when the work was done.

"Nothing could have been better!" agreed Sharp.

Then Frank went into the pilot-house and sent the Breeze up to an elevation of ten thousand feet.

"Not another stop until we reach Athabasca!" he said.

Full speed was put upon the propeller, and the Breeze sped on like a meteor.

The great panorama of Nature below slid away like magic and very soon the region was left far behind.

The Rainy Lake region was traversed all that day.

When night came they were over Manitoba and reeling off miles toward the wilderness beyond.

The next morning the waters of Winnipeg Lake shone in full view. Truly they were making wonderful progress.

"At this rate," declared Frank, "we shall very soon see Athabasca."

"And perhaps find Arthur Preston," put in Sharp.

"Let us hope so."

Pomp had now fully recovered from his wound. He was indeed more chipper than ever and felt in such good spirits that Barney could not resist the opportunity to give him a good jollying.

"Bejabbers, it's lucky that nobody else got that bullet in his head."

CHAPTER VI.

POMP'S FALL—THE SETTLEMENT.

"Why yo' fink dat, chile?" asked Pomp, smelling a rat. "Begorra, if he had it wud have kilt him; but on me wurrud, the bullet ain't med as cud crack yure skull, sor."

Pomp's eyes glittered.

"Den yo' fink mah hed was too thick, sah?" he asked.

"Yez are good at guessin', naygur."

"I take dat as an insult, sah."

"Arrah, go long wid yez! Yer can't fool me that way. An' phwat the divil do I care for that matter?"

"I done show yo', chile!" blustered Pomp. "I don' allow

no cheap white trash like yo' to sassify me in such a manner."

Barney grinned broadly.

"What are yez gwine to do about it, naygur?" he asked insolently.

This was enough for Pomp.

His dander was up at once, and he shook his head like mad bull.

"Ki dar, luk out fo' yo'se'f, I'ish!" he yelled. "I's gwine to break yo' in two!"

Then, ducking his head, he made a rush for the Celt.

Had he struck Barney full force the latter would have suffered seriously. But fortunately for Barney, he did not do this.

The Celt acted just in the nick of time. He dodged nimbly and Pomp just missed the mark.

The result was that the darky went sprawling upon his face. In a moment Barney was upon him.

Then followed a rough-and-tumble wrestle about the deck. Neither seemed to get the best of this, and honor were divided until a startling incident brought the affair to a termination.

Suddenly the two jokers rolled heavily against the rail of the air-ship.

It was at a point where the anchor was clewed to the bow of the craft. The rail was in a movable section and fastened by a small bolt.

Barney hurled Pomp against this with such terrific force that the bolt broke and the section crashed through.

The darky went through like a cannon-ball and shot out into the air. Barney narrowly escaped following him.

Felix Sharp, in the forward part of the cabin, had witnessed the catastrophe.

An awful cry of horror escaped his lips. He knew that they were fully a mile above the earth.

To fall this distance must mean death; Pomp had gone over the edge.

"Frank! come quick!" he screamed. "Pomp has gone to his death!"

Frank rushed out of the cabin excitedly. Barney had scrambled to his feet and stood trembling like an aspen.

He dreaded looking down to see the awful fate of his comrade.

"Barney," cried Frank, "has Pomp gone overboard?"

"Shure, sor, an' he has!" replied the horrified Celt. "It a bit av fun we were havin', sor."

"As usual," exclaimed Frank, sharply; "this time I doubt ends your foolishness. Into the pilot-house—quick—and stop the boat. We must pick him up!"

Barney needed no second bidding.

Into the pilot-house he sprang.

He quickly checked the speed of the propeller, and quickened the rotascope so that the air-ship began to sink.

Frank and the detective rushed to the rail and looked down with horror, expecting to see Pomp's mangled body somewhere below.

They were above jagged, rocky hills, and to fall upon such a surface must have been fatal for the negro.

But nothing could be seen of him.

Doubtless he had fallen among some of the deep clefts or crevices, and it would be no slight task to find his body. So Frank reflected.

There was a terrible lump in the young inventor's throat, and he thought a good deal of Pomp.

"Poor fellow!" he exclaimed, as tears sprang to his eyes. "What a sad ending for him!"

"Do you believe he is dead?" asked Sharp, hopefully.

"There is no possible hope that he is alive," replied Frank.

"We must then search for his body and give it decent burial!"

"Of course!"

But just as they reached this melancholy conclusion, the men were startled by a strange sound.

It was a voice familiar to them, and seemed to come from beneath their feet.

"Massy sakes, Marse Frank! Sabe dis chile, fo' de lub Heaben!"

"What!" gasped Frank, "that is Pomp's voice, as I live!" Pomp!" exclaimed Sharp, and they exchanged glances.

The distance to the earth was too great for his voice to be plain. What did it mean?

Then an idea came to Frank.

Quick as a flash he threw himself upon his face and crawled to the edge of the air-ship's deck, where the section of rail was gone.

This gave him a view of the underneath part of the air-ship's hull.

"Come," he gave a loud cry of joy.

There was Pomp, hanging by the anchor ropes, which had passed beneath the keel from one side to the other.

"It was going over from the deck, the darky's legs had become entangled in these ropes, and he had slid under the hull and there safely suspended.

It was a miraculous escape from what would have seemed certain death.

Words cannot express the joy of all on board the Breeze as they realized that Pomp was safe.

"Hurrah!" screamed Felix Sharp, "Pomp is all right! He's worth two dead men yet!"

"You're right!" cried Frank, joyfully. "Hang right on, my lad. We'll get you out of that quickly."

"A'right, Marse Frank!" replied the darky; "dis chile amn't ready fo' to die yet!"

Frank quickly lowered another rope and swung it under the keel until Pomp could grasp it.

Then the darky swung out in midair and was quickly drawn aboard.

Barney was so delighted that he fairly wept as he embraced his chum.

"Beggorra, I'd niver have forgiven meself," he cried, "if yez had been kilt intoirely, naygur. I'd 'ave been yer murderer!"

"Golly, don' yo' say dat, I'ish," replied Pomp. "It was mah own fault jes' as much as yours."

"At any rate," put in Frank Reade, Jr., "I trust it will be a lesson to both of you, and that you will see the folly of your conduct."

The two jokers looked sheepish and went off about their duties.

Winnipeg Lake was crossed, and next came Little Winnipeg and Manitoba Lakes. Beyond these came the Saskatchewan and the true wilderness of the Northwest.

Hundreds of miles of unbroken forest extended in every direction.

Here Nature was seen in her primeval state, and rich in all her stores. But there was little sign of human life until one day upon the North Branch of the Saskatchewan a dingy little settlement was espied.

The air-ship hung over this, and it was duly inspected with glasses.

Perhaps a hundred frame shanties of various sizes were erected upon the bank of the river.

One structure of logs, evidently a fort, stood at a bend of the river.

Rough-looking men, miners and fur hunters, were thronged about the shanties. Myriad canoes lay upon the banks, or plied the river current.

"A genuine fur trading post!" declared Frank Reade, Jr.; "it may be a Hudson's Bay post, but I don't believe it. Let us ascertain."

"Shall we visit them?" asked Sharp.

"Yes."

"But——"

"What?"

"Perhaps they will not care to make our acquaintance. Do you remember our experience in Michigan?"

"I think we can bring them to terms," said Frank, grimly. "Down we go!"

The air-ship began to sink.

It was seen that the settlement below was in a state of great excitement. Armed men rushed about.

But still no shot was fired. Frank appeared at the rail with a white flag as a token of amity.

This seemed to allay their fears, and the fur hunters gathered in groups and watched the descent of the air-ship.

Frank did not venture to descend all the way.

Two hundred feet from the earth he threw out his anchors, and the air-ship remained motionless, with the rotascope slowly revolving.

Then the young inventor shouted:

"Hello, down there; I want to talk with you."

A tall, giant-framed man, with folded arms, stepped out of the crowd.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked.

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., an American," replied Frank.

"I thought ye was. What kind of a hurdy-gurdy have ye got thar?"

"This is the air-ship Breeze."

"Air-ship?"

"Yes."

"Wall, I'll be durned! I've heerd tell of balloons goin' up in ther air, but this ar' ther fust air-ship. Kin ye go anywhar ye please in that caboose?"

"Anywhere," replied Frank.

"That beats ther beavers! What is ther kentry comin' to next. Cum down, stranger, an' make yerself at home. This is Satan's Bend, a tradin' post for furs, an' I'm Bill Black, ther mayor."

"A trading post!" exclaimed Frank. "Are you of the Hudson's Bay Company?"

"Not by a durned sight. We are ther only community in British Columbia as ain't afraid of thet grindin' monopoly, ther Hudson's Bay Company. They've tried to kill us out, but they kain't do it. We're all Yankees, an' too durned lively fer 'em. But cum down an' let's see what sort of a feller ye are."

Frank looked at Sharp.

The detective looked serious.

"Is it safe?"

"I can't say that I just like the name of the place. If Satan's Bend is a true appellation, I don't believe we had better risk it."

Frank laughed.

"I don't think it is," he said. "At any rate, I am willing to take chances. I think it will be all right."

"You know best."

So Frank stepped to the rail.

"We are going to cultivate your acquaintance, Mr. Black," he cried. "I hope we will be friends."

"Yew bet we will, if yer a square trick!" cried Black. "I'll travel on the square myself, an' I'm glad to know ye."

Frank doubted his man no longer.

Down went the Breeze and rested upon the ground. The denizens of Satan's Bend crowded about.

The air-ship was a source of deep wonder to them, and they regarded it with amazement and interest. It was quite an event for the quiet little trading post of the Northwest.

CHAPTER VII.

INFORMATION GAINED.

Frank gripped hands with Bill Black, the mayor of Satan's Bend.

"Durned glad to meet ye," was the characteristic mark of that worthy. "Allus glad to meet a gentleman, even if I ain't one myself."

Frank laughed at this.

"I think we shall be friends," he said; "but one thing puzzles me."

"What's that?"

"How you manage to elude the Hudson's Bay Company, who claim to control all of this region."

Bill Black closed one eye.

"We don't try to elude them," he said.

"You don't?"

"No. They simply know better than to trouble us. We sent a gang of hoodlums up here once to try and do us out, but they didn't do it. We licked 'em out of their boots and they've let us alone ever since."

"Good enough!" laughed Frank.

"You see, it's hard for them to get an armed force in here to whip us. It would cost them more than the trade would be worth. There's plenty of game in all this region for all of us. We know an' they know it, an' by the way, we're goin' to have our share!"

Frank had begun to take a liking to Bill Black.

The mayor of Satan's Bend impressed him as a well-souled, big-hearted fellow, who was above mean and low tricks.

Some conversation was indulged in, and the mayor took Frank into his cabin, where a nip of whiskey was tak-

Then the compliment was returned, and Frank took Blackboard the air-ship and showed him all over it.

The mayor was deeply interested, and when all was over, tipped Frank's hand and said:

"Boss, I like yer style; yer suit me to a T. I reckon we n hitch horses to a dead charm."

"I think so," agreed Frank. "By and by I have a matter would like to discuss with you."

"Is it a favor?"

"It may be."

"Anything ye want of me call on and ye'll git it," said e bluff woodsman. "That's the kind of a man I am!"

That night the air-ship rested in the little settlement of tan's Bend.

"Then you will stop here?" asked the detective.

"I think I will," replied Frank. "You understand my rpose, do you not?"

"Not exactly."

"I think it quite likely that at some time or other Preston y have visited this settlement. Again we may be able come across some backwoodsman here who can give us exact idea as to where he may be found."

"Good!" cried the detective. "That is a capital scheme!" Satan's Bend presented a curious picture at night.

Before the public houses or store houses flambeaux of tch burned fiercely, giving a dull, weird light to the surindings.

The hunters and trappers in their picturesque costumes mpinged about and drank vile whiskey in the one barroom, told thrilling stories of their adventures in the woods. Occasionally one or more would arrive with a load of fine ver, otter and fox furs, coming from the heart of the lerness.

Generally these came down the river in canoes, but some- uses a party would come in on foot, bearing their furs upon otsadle or a litter.

t was a strange and curious scene, and the aerial voy- s sat out on deck and watched it for some time.

inhen as Frank and Sharp sat there and watched it a tall tron loomed up through the gloom.

s He clambered over the rail and cried:

he Hello, Mister Reade! Thought I'd cum down an' see this eve."

glad to see you, Mr. Black," said Frank. "Pray have a a w and Thank yer."

ie mayor of Satan's Bend seated himself beside Frank yor continued: tak

"What do yer think of Satan's Bend, enyhow, my friend? Give us yer candid opinion of it."

Frank replied lightly:

"Oh, it is a very promising place."

The mayor hemmed and hawed a little.

"'Tain't a very stylish sort of a place yet," he said; "but it's a heap better nor it was afore I became mayor."

"Indeed!"

"Thet's a fact, an' I ain't blowin' my own horn, nuther."

"I am glad to hear that."

"Yer see, how it got ther name of Satan's Bend was this: A feller from Winnipeg cum up hyar an' teetotally tore things all up hyar for a few years. It was when ther Bend wuz fust gettin' its growth.

"Jack Caruthers was his name, an' he was a tough from a tough place, yer kin bet. It was a terrible place hyar for some years, an' honest men had to keep away. All through ther kentry ther boys talked about ther place, an' 'lowed that Satan must have got inter it. An' that's how it got ther name of Satan's Bend."

The mayor cleared his throat and then went on:

"It wuz a pizen place an' things went from bad to wuss, until one day some of ther cockalorums of ther town got turned ag'in Caruthers.

"He sassed them, an' they just concluded tew run him out. They sent down to Winnipeg for me to cum up.

"'Cum up an' tame this chap,' war ther word they sent. I jest jumped inter ther buckskins an' took my bowie an' cum up. Ther citizens of ther town met me in private an' offered to elect me mayor.

"But I'd got tew take my seat away from Caruthers. They 'lowed they'd stand by me. I told 'em I'd do it.

"Meantime some sneak peached ther thing ter Caruthers, an' he went around loaded for-b'ar. I didn't hurry for a day or two, an' then I went out to meet my man.

"I met him. It wuz jest over thar by Ben Brady's saloon. He seen me fust. I've got the ferrer of a bullet along my ribs to remember it by.

"I didn't wait tew shoot. I just whipped out my bowie an' started for him. He fired again, but I failed tew stop ther bullet. I got him.

"Ther bowie took ther pistol out of his hand an' four fingers with it. He warn't in ther scrimmage at all.

"Over yonder thar by ther Bend they dumped him, an' some tender heart put up a shingle to mark ther spot. It wuz a big day for Satan's Bend.

"They've allus talked about changin' ther name of ther place, but they ain't quite done it yit. I heern tell they wanted to call it Black City, arter me, but cum tew think

it over, thet was most as bad a name fer ther place as Satan's Bend."

Frank was greatly amused by the mayor's story.

He did not doubt a word of it, for he knew well the character of the backwoodsmen in general.

So he said:

"I must certainly congratulate you, Mr. Black. You make an excellent mayor."

"Sho! You don't think so, dew ye? Well, I'm glad of thet. But look hyar, tenderfoot!"

"Well?"

"Yew got my curiosity way up a leetle while ago when ye said yew wanted tew see me on a pertickler matter. What wuz it?"

Frank drew a deep breath.

"Yes, Mr. Black," he said, seriously, "and it is a very important matter."

"Wall?"

"Have you ever come across a man in these parts by the name of Preston?"

Black was silent a moment; he seemed to be thinking.

"He is a recluse," continued Frank. "He has a retreat somewhere up around Athabasca, I believe."

Black gave a sudden start.

"Preston, the hermit!" he cried. "Durn my moccasins! of course I know him. What of it?"

Frank was inclined to be excited, a most unusual thing for him.

"Then you know him?" he asked.

"Of course I do."

"What sort of a man is he?"

Black turned and looked quizzingly at Frank. Then he pressed a finger against his forehead.

"Not exactly right," he said. "I reckon he's beyond us chaps tew understand. Some of ther boys say he has a history, an' that he is afraid tew go back East fer fear of bein' hung."

"Ah!"

"I met him onct, an' that was way up on ther Athabasca Portage. He was as pleasant a chap as I ever talked with. But I cudn't find out anything more about him, an' he wudn't travel in my company any distance whatsumdever."

"Is not that odd?"

"Dretful queer! But I reckon he lives in a region whar liberty is ther king-pin, so he kin do jest as he's a mind ter. Don't know as I blame him."

"Do you know exactly where he lives?"

"Never seen his dugout; but cum tew think of it, I did hear thet he had built a fine cabin way up in ther Bear Lake

kentry, two hundred miles from any settlement, an' t he never cum down only twict a year with his furs."

Then Black suddenly recollected himself, and with expressive suddenness turned and asked:

"But do you know him, friend?"

"No," replied Frank, steadily. "I am only familiar v his name. I heard that he was living up here somewhe But—does he not have a son with him?"

"Yas, so they say. A young feller, smart as a whip, I kain't say I ever hev seen him."

Frank was elated with all this information.

Several things were settled in his mind. Preston e his son were alive. They were in the Athabasca region. would not seem difficult to locate them more exactly and once.

"Which I will do," muttered the young inventor. must tell Sharp all this."

"Is there any way in which I can learn of the exact cality of the hermit home of Preston?" he asked. "I wou like to pay him a visit."

"I dunno," replied Black, shaking his head. "I've h said thet he ain't very civil tew visitors, an' don't keeme 'em."

"That is all right," said Frank, with a smile. "En be glad to see me. I have good news for him."

"Yer don't mean it! Wall, I'll tell ye what I'll do!" l Black. "If yew'll cum up tew my shop bye an' bye I'll an' find out more fer ye."

"And where is your shop?"

"Over yender what ther two big flambeaux are burnas It's ther saloon, an' if yew feel like a nip when yew thar it's all ready fer yer."

"Thank you," replied Frank. "I will come over la"

"Do so."

Black now took his leave. He had hardly gone wh a form arose from the shadows near Frank.

"What! Is that you, Sharp?" asked the young inve in surprise.

CHAPTER VIII.

FUN AT SATAN'S BEND.

It was the detective.

His voice trembled with excitement as he said:

"You will pardon me. I could not help listening."

"Then you heard all?"

"Yes."

"Good enough," said Frank. "Sit down here and n talk it over."

The detective complied.

"We have got on Preston's track."

"Yes."

"That is half the battle. I had feared that we could not find him. But we have hit it rich."

"It looks like it. But we have not found him yet."

"That is true, and in this wild region it is like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"True enough. I have a proposition to make."

"What is it?"

"Let us presently stroll over to the saloon of Black and see if we cannot gain more information."

"We will do it."

Frank arose and called for Barney. To his surprise he found that both were gone.

Then he remembered that he had a short while before given them permission to walk out in the town.

Frank, however, pressed a spring which locked all the doors and windows, and then said:

"No harm can come to the air-ship. Let us go."

The flambeau lights were outdone by the searchlight of the Breeze, which illumined the whole village. This was a source of much wonderment as well as delight to the denizens.

Frank and Sharp walked up the little street toward the saloon.

A great crowd of rough men were gathered about the door.

As they drew nearer it was seen that some unusual thing was transpiring there. Then a chorus of voices was heard.

"I'll bet on ther nigger!"

"He'll down him!"

"Ten to one on ther nig!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Frank. "I believe Pomp is when a scrape!"

Then the darky's voice was heard:

"If I'se gwine to wrastle this gemmen, I mus' hab fair play."

"Ye shail have it, nig!"

"Give ther coon a chance!"

Frank and Sharp were interested. They drew nearer and beheld an amusing scene.

In the midst of the group was Pomp and a giant-framed hunter locked in each other's embrace.

They were engaged in a friendly wrestle.

Pomp was an adept in this art.

He was much smaller than his antagonist, whom the hunters were heavily backing.

Of course Barney was backing his friend.

"Bejabers, I'll bet the shirt off av me back on the naygur!" he cried. "If there's any wan will take me let him step up like a man."

"Hello!" exclaimed Sharp, with a laugh. "Our friends have speedily got acquainted here."

"Leave that to Barney and Pomp," said Frank. "They are sociable chaps. It looks to me as if Pomp had bit off more than he can chew."

"Indeed it does."

"Yet he is a scientific wrestler."

"Let us see what he can do."

So Frank and the detective drew nearer to the circle and watched the result of the struggle.

Now the battle was on.

Backward and forward swayed the two contestants.

Pomp seemed a wafer in the grasp of the giant hunter.

But the darky hung to his arm like an eel. In vain the powerful hunter tried to throw him.

As fast as the darky went down he managed to get up again.

Thus far he had played a defensive game all the while.

But now it seemed that the big hunter was tiring.

This was Pomp's game.

He rapidly began to assume the offensive.

His lithe body swayed to and fro, and the giant hunter was seen to topple.

A great cheer went up.

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd. "The nig will do him!"

Indeed, this seemed a fact. Pomp already had his man on the hip. Suddenly he went down.

It was a fair fall, and the decision was given to the darky. The excitement was great.

An athletic contest of this kind never fails to be of keen interest to that class of men.

Pomp was the hero of the hour, and he came in for an ovation.

He had downed the best man of the entire region, and was quite a lion.

"Golly, I done fink he am a bery heaby chap!" said the darky, rolling his eyes up comically; "but jes' de same he hab to come down when dis chile git aftah him."

"Ye done well, naygur!" said Barney. "Yez kin trow down sich jays as dat, but yez kain't trow me!"

"Huh! Yo' want to try it, I'ish?" exclaimed Pomp.

"Begorra, it's been troied many a toime!"

"An' yo' ginerally got de wuss ob it, too."

"Divil a bit! Arrah, there, naygur, if ye have any strength to waste, yez betther take some wan av the crowd an' not spind it on me!"

"Dat am right," agreed Pomp, rolling up his sleeves again. "Any oder gemmen in de crowd want fo' to try me on de rastle?"

Nobody seemed inclined to accept the challenge. But one tall backwoodsman stepped up and said:

"By beavers, if yer want to try a jumpin' match I'm yer huckleberry."

"Donno know nuffin' 'bout jumpin'," declared Pomp.

"Wall, then, I'll run ye for a hundred yards."

"Ain' much ob a sprinter," replied Pomp. "But yere am my frien' yere, dis I'ishman, laks fo' to run."

Barney's eyes danced.

He saw fun ahead.

He had often covered the one-hundred-yard limit in less than ten seconds. He was ready for the challenge.

"Begorra, I'll thry yez, me fri'nd!" cried the Celt.

The big hunter looked down upon the square-built Irishman with something like pity and contempt.

"Kin yew run, stranger?"

"Bejabers, thry me an' see," retorted Barney; "that's the best way fer yez to foind out."

"Yew kain't keep in sight of me, yew little sawed-off," jested the hunter. "Yew ain't got long enough legs."

"Don' yo' fool yo'se'f!" said Pomp. "'Tain't long legs dat allus wins de race."

"Wall, we'll test thet," said the big hunter. "Air yew reddy, Irish?"

"Begorra, I am that."

"Measure the course," cried a tall sport in the crowd. "Here's a tape measure. Give us just one hundred yards."

The one hundred yards were quickly measured and posts set. Then judges and referees were appointed.

Frank and Sharp watched the scene with some interest.

"Barney is quite a sprinter," said the young inventor, "but whether he can beat that fellow or not I cannot say."

"I shall bet on him, anyway," laughed the detective. "I feel sure he will succeed."

"Let us hope so."

Barney pulled off his shoes and stockings. He also removed his coat and stood on the line.

The tall hunter seemed extremely confident that he would defeat the little Irishman.

Some money was wagered, and Pomp emptied his pockets, betting on his chum.

"You'll see dat de big bloke jes' won't be in it," cried Pomp. "On mah wo'd, de I'ish hab got a walk-ober."

The contestants stood on the line and waited for the word.

It was given.

"Go!"

Away they flew like the wind.

Down the measured course they went. The tall hunter made long and tremendous strides.

But Barney's legs flew like lightning, and he ran close to the ground. For half the distance they were on even terms.

Then the Celt spurted, and was in a flash a yard ahead of his companion. When the finish line was reached this had been increased to two yards.

The victory was a hollow one.

The hunter was beaten so easily that he could hardly realize it. His astonishment was intense.

How the crowd yelled and cheered there in the glare of the electric searchlight. It was an exciting moment.

Pomp and Barney were the heroes of the occasion.

But at this moment, and while they were receiving the congratulations of the crowd, they chanced to espy Frank and the detective looking at them.

Both instantly started full tilt for the air-ship. Frank and Sharp laughed well.

But at this moment Bill Black saw the two visitors, and at once rushed forward, saying:

"Cum inter my place; I'm durned glad ye've cum!"

Frank and Sharp complied, and entered the saloon.

The scene was a curious one.

About the tables in the dimly lighted place were a gang of rough-looking men. They were mostly engaged in small games of poker.

The place was reeking with tobacco smoke, and loud with harsh voices. At one side was a long, rough bar, where were kept a tier of black bottles.

These contained the vilest of liquor, which was dealt out to the crowd in small potations at an immense price.

Black led the way into a small room off the main saloon, here was rough chairs and a table.

"Be seated, gents," said the mayor of Satan's Bend. "Make yerselves at hum."

The invitation was accepted.

Black procured a bottle of whiskey, but his visitors begged off and did not partake of the stuff.

"Wall, gents," said the mayor, lighting a black pipe, "hain't got much more information fer ye yit. They de tell me thar is a young stripling cums down from Athabasca with furs who mought know suthin' about Preston an' his hermit home. Dunno whether the young chap is hyar or not. By jim-cracks!"

The mayor started up. Just at that moment a tall, fine-looking youth, with regular features and dark, sad-looking eyes, passed the door.

He was about to mingle with the crowd as Black exclaimed:

"By gum! Thet's ther lad now. He's a pert chap, an' I'll ax him fer news fer ye."

CHAPTER IX.

A MESSAGE SENT.

It was very easy to see that the youth was of a type far different from that about him.

His features were refined and handsome, and his manner almost womanly in its grace.

There was something about him which at once attracted one.

Black stepped quickly out and touched him upon the arm.

"Look hyar, young feller, I wanten talk with yew."

The youth gave a start, then smiled pleasantly, and replied:

"I am at your service, sir."

"Cum in hyar."

He followed the saloon keeper into the private room. Black closed the door. The youth regarded Frank and the detective with surprise and something like distrust.

"Young gent, I don't know yer name," said the tavern keeper, "but I reckon yer from ther Athabasca region."

"I am," replied the youth. "My name—you may call me Harry Perkins."

"Well," resumed Black, "yer jest ther chap we want. You kin tell us suthin' about Athabasca."

The youth's face cleared.

"Oh, yes," he said, with a smile. "It is a good fur country."

"Then ye've jist cum in with a litter?"

"Yes, an' some of the finest beavers you ever saw."

"Good enuff! But excuse me, these are gents what came here in the air-ship—Mister Reade an' Mister Sharp."

"I am glad to meet the gentlemen," said young Perkins. "I have been wondering at and admiring your air-ship. It is a positive marvel."

"I am glad you think so," said Frank, pleasantly. "You shall have the privilege of going aboard her in the morning."

"Thank you."

"But we have a great favor to ask of you, Mr. Perkins."

"Name it," said the youth.

"You can tell us about Athabasca. Have you ever met hermit there by the name of Preston?"

The youth gave a start, and a swift, deadly pallor swept over his face.

The detective, Sharp, had been watching him narrowly and noted this. He formed instant conclusions.

But the youth instantly recovered.

"Why, yes," he said, with a smile. "I have heard of him. Why do you ask?"

"We are anxious to know his whereabouts, and long to find him."

"I cannot tell you that."

The youth looked steadily at Frank. The young inventor said:

"You can, but you will not; what are you afraid of?"

"Well," replied the youth, candidly, "I never will be the one to betray the man. I know why he is a recluse. The officers of the law have been upon his track for years, but they will never find him!"

"Then you will not tell where his hiding place is?"

"Certainly not."

The youth arose and looked toward the door. Detective Sharp now took up the conversation.

"Mr. Perkins," he said, "you need have no fears on Mr. Preston's account. We are not going to arrest him and bring him back to die on the gallows. We have instead come to bring him the best of news and that is that he is proven innocent. The man whom he believed he murdered, Philip Carr, is alive and well to-day."

"Philip Carr, alive and well!" gasped the youth, strangely agitated. "Then—it was all a mistake——"

"Yes. Preston is an innocent man!"

"Heaven be praised! I will go and tell him, and——"

The youth paused.

A strange, crafty light came into his eyes and superseded the joy. He drew himself up.

"No," he said, coldly. "I am not to be deceived by such a ruse. Your device to trap poor Preston is a clever one, but it did not work."

"No, no!" cried Sharp, earnestly; "it is no device. It is God's truth. I came from his sorrowing wife to entreat him to return. I come from—your mother!"

"My mother?"

"Yes, for you cannot deceive me. I know that you are not Harry Perkins, but Harry Preston, the hermit's son. You cannot deny it."

For one moment the youth's form trembled like a reed in a gale.

Then he said in a hoarse voice:

"You know nothing of the kind."

"What is the use to be so foolish, Harry?" said Sharp, persuasively. "We are not here to entrap your father. We

are his friends. We come to bring him back to his wife, to your mother, and all dear friends."

The youth stood like a statue on the floor for some moments.

He seemed endeavoring to read the hearts of the men before him. The overpowering distrust upon his face showed this.

"I will not admit that I am Harry Preston," he said; "but I will say that he is a friend of mine. I would defend his father with my life, for he is innocent of the crime charged against him. You must furnish the best of evidence before he will dare to trust you and return."

"What better evidence could you have than this?" said the detective. "A letter from your own mother."

Sharp handed the epistle to the youth, who read it carefully.

It was an earnest, pleading missive, full of love and protestations of undying faith. The youth's form swayed and tears welled from his eyes.

"Did she send this?" he asked, in a half-whisper.

"She did," replied Sharp. "All of your father's friends as well as his wife beseech him to return."

"It would be too much happiness for him to know that this is true," declared the youth. "I will take this letter to him. Will you await the answer?"

"Why not bring him here, or why not all go in the air-ship?"

Again the light of distrust shone in the youth's eyes.

"May I have my way?" he pleaded. "I will bring an answer as soon as possible."

"How soon will that be?"

"Perhaps a week."

The detective looked at Frank Reade, Jr.

The young inventor nodded.

"All right," said the detective, "we will wait. Let us have the reply as soon as possible. What is better, bring your father back with you."

The youth stepped forward and held out his hand.

Silently he gripped the hand of each, then without another word left the room.

It was an impressive moment.

Bill Black's gaze was averted for a moment, and he seemed to be brushing a mist from his eyes.

"Wall," he said, "that's a peart lad. I hope thar don't none of them bloody Klamaths git him afore he gits back into Athabasky."

"The Klamaths!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes."

"Are they on the warpath?"

"Went on last week, an' they've been raisin' Cain with all ther traps on ther Athabasky. Thar's been a number of scrimmages. It's two ter one ther Hudson's Bay people hev put them up tew it."

The Klamaths, as Frank well knew, were a treacherous blood-thirsty tribe of Indians.

It is not at all unlikely that they might some time descend upon the settlement of Satan's Bend.

Such a contingency was not unlooked for, and fresh ammunition had been brought up from Winnipeg, to be all in readiness for such a thing.

Some while later Frank and the detective went back to the air-ship.

They turned in at once, as both were extremely tired. They slept soundly until morning.

There seemed no way but to wait at Satan's Bend a week or until a message was received from Preston.

But it was by no means a dull outlook.

The hunters fraternized kindly with the voyagers, and did all in their power to make it pleasant for them.

Hunting trips were planned, and many sorts of sports devised to kill time. Several days thus passed.

"If Preston is only sensible enough to come back with his son, then our mission is ended," said Sharp; "let us hope it will be so."

"I doubt it very much," said Frank; "they are afraid of a trap."

"What can we do, then?"

"Simply hunt them up again, and endeavor to convince them of their error."

"That will not be easy."

"No; but it is our only course."

But the fifth day came, and it brought with it a series of thrilling incidents.

Early in the morning a party of hunters came hastily into camp.

They came from down the river, and brought a thrilling report.

This was that a large body of Klamaths fully two thousand strong, were coming down upon the settlement to literally annihilate it.

"They are led by a white renegade," reported one of the hunters, "an' he's hired an' paid by ther Hudson's Bay Company."

Of course the little settlement was thrown into a state of intense excitement.

Bill Black came to Frank Reade, Jr., with lengthened features, and said:

"By buffers, it looks bad fer us, Mr. Reade! Thar's buff in thet gang to bust us up!"

"Don't lose courage," said Frank, encouragingly. "You are not whipped yet."

"Yew bet we ain't!" cried the bluff saloon keeper. "We'll die with our boots on!"

Every hour fresh reports came in of the advance of the Klamaths.

They seemed to be coming in all directions. Some were coming up the river in canoes and others through the deep forest.

The settlement was surrounded.

There was nothing to do but to await the attack of the Klamaths, and if possible repulse it.

"Had we not better get out of here, Frank?" asked the detective. "We don't want to mix up in the scrape, do we?"

"Why, of course we will," said Frank, resolutely. "I'm going to see Satan's Bend come to grief. They have treated us hospitably, and I shall stand by them!"

"Well, that is right enough," acknowledged the detective.

The hunters were all massed at the fort. Spies were out in the woods, and every precaution against a surprise was taken.

It soon became evident that the Klamaths would come upon the noon. Already skirmishing shots were heard in the woods.

Bill Black was perhaps the most agitated of all.

Already he saw his trading post reduced to ashes and that of the denizens slaughtered.

But he said grimly:

"We'll give 'em a hard fight, an' don't yew forgit it. All will die hard."

CHAPTER X.

BATTLE WITH THE KLAMATHS.

Frank Reade, Jr., had made little talk and had kept quietly aboard the Breeze. But he had not been idle.

He had caused Barney and Pomp to place all portable arms in the cabin, and draw the steel shutters at all the windows.

Barrel loopholes in the hull of the air-ship were opened, and rifles were placed at each, with many rounds of cartridges. Thus the Breeze was fully equipped for battle.

For Frank intended to take an active part in the strife. He did not intend to go back on his new-made friends at Satan's Bend.

The scattered shots in the woods soon became a concentrated fire.

The line of hunters made a most stubborn resistance, but sheer weight of numbers drove them steadily back to the shelter of the fort.

One or two of the shanties in the outskirts of the settlement were fired. Then the red foe massed for an attack upon the fort.

Frank felt that the time for action had come.

He was the first to open fire from the air-ship's deck. The Breeze occupied a point at right angles with the fort and the forest, and allowed an enfilading fire upon the attacking force.

The Klamaths hovered yet in the verge of the forest.

But whenever a tufted head was seen it was fired upon.

Thus the battle opened.

As all the rifles of the air-ship's party were repeaters, a steady and terrific fire could be kept up.

The Klamaths, however, were in such large numbers that this could scarcely hold them at bay very long.

Suddenly they advanced to the charge.

Out of the woods they came with wild yells, and straight for the fort they went.

It was a critical moment.

The defenders of the fort fired as rapidly as they could, sending volley after volley into the foe.

But it did not check them.

On they came more furiously than ever.

"Begorra, the divil wudn't howld thim back!" cried Barney, who had been firing as fast as he could work his repeater. "Phwat the divil will we do?"

"They are going to carry the fort!" cried Detective Sharp.

"Golly, dey am almost ober the palisades now!" cried Pomp.

This was true enough. The Klamaths swarmed to the very stockade. Victory seemed theirs.

Frank dropped his rifle and sprang into the pilot-house. He pressed a spring which slipped the anchors and then started the rotascope.

The air-ship rose a dozen feet from the ground and rushed like a huge bird straight for the Klamaths.

The act had a startling effect on the savages.

They were aghast at such a spectacle, and those who witnessed it became instantly convinced that an evil spirit was swooping down upon them.

Superstitious fears ruled for the moment, and at once the Indian lines were in tumultuous confusion.

Back they fled before this mysterious flying wonder which they could not understand.

Back into the forest, and the red foe had suffered a repulse.

The air-ship again settled down by the fort, and a mighty cheer went up from the hunters.

It was an opportune and shrewd move on Frank's part.

Filled with superstitious fear the Klamaths lingered in the shadow of the woods and fired in a desultory way at the fort.

They could not understand the nature of this mysterious flying machine, and were inclined to attribute to it divine powers.

But in their party were white men who comprehended the nature of the air-ship and proceeded to explain it to the savages.

The result was that the Indians gained fresh courage; their superstition was allayed and they were ready to return to the attack.

Again the battle began.

Once more the Klamaths came out of the woods to the attack. Frank sailed the air-ship over their heads, but it did not check them this time.

They fired volleys at the air-ship, the bullets rattling against the hull. But no harm was done.

On to the fort rushed the savages.

It seemed certain that they intended to carry it this time.

Frank placed his hand upon a box in the pilot-house. It contained the deadly electric bombs.

It was in his mind to use them and blow the savages to perdition.

But it would make such hideous slaughter that he hesitated to do it.

He was ever averse to human slaughter.

And yet it looked as if he would be compelled to do it.

But at this juncture a happy thought struck him. He at once acted upon it.

It was possible to so heavily charge a number of wires that contact with them would prostrate a man.

Frank quickly arranged a number of these so that they fell over the rail of the air-ship and hung for twenty or thirty feet.

Then he charged the wires and lowered the air-ship so that they trailed upon the ground.

Right over the body of Klamaths the air-ship passed.

Bullets by hundreds flattened themselves against the air-ship's hull. But now the air-ship was right over the mass of savages.

The scene which followed baffles adequate description.

The electric wires prostrated the savages by hundreds. It did not kill, but stunned and terrified them. The effect was most successful.

They were unable to understand the mysterious force which was so powerful and which they could not see.

A panic seized them, and bodily they broke and fled. Cheers pealed from the lips of the victorious hunters. It was a grand victory; another successful repulse.

The air-ship was winning the day for Satan's Bend. The savages retired to the shadows of the forest once more, and a desultory fire was kept up.

The air-ship settled down by the stockade, and Bill Black came out and hailed Frank.

"By beavers! yew are a dandy!" he cried. "If it had been fer yew we'd all been up Salt river afore this!"

"What do you think?" asked Frank. "Will they draw off now?"

"What, an' leave us alone?"

"Yes."

"Naw! Yew don't know ther Klamaths. They're wile nor ther itch fer hangin' on. I don't believe they'd give up till we've whittled 'em all to pieces!"

"Is that so?"

"Jes' so!"

"Well, then, you think we had better take extreme measures?"

"I dew; an' they kain't be too much so."

"That settles it," declared Frank. "I will do so."

"What's more, it's comin' on dark, an' they'll have the best of us arter thet."

"Well, then, we'll settle the matter at once," said Frank.

"Kin we do it?"

"Do it!" exclaimed the young inventor; "in the easiest way. You shall see."

"Bully fer yew an' yer air-ship. Yew kin bet Satan's Bend will never forget Frank Reade, Jr.!"

"Good! I hope they will not."

"What is it now, Frank?" asked the detective, as he came up.

"I think we will have a decisive talk with the Klamaths now," said Frank. "It is the best and only way to terminate this affair."

"I believe you are right."

At this moment Bill Black cried:

"Heigho! Hyar cums a truce!"

It was true that one of the savages was advancing toward the forest with a white flag.

He came up within speaking distance, and Black said:

"Talk with him, Mr. Reade. See what he has to say."

"White man talk with Injun?" asked the truce-bearer.
 "Yes," replied Frank. "What do you want?"
 "Me come from big chief, Long Arrow. He say white
 surrender, no get killed. Jest leave Injun's hunting
 ground."

"Oh, you want us to surrender, do you?"

"Yes."

"Well, you go back to your chief, Long Arrow, and tell
 him that if he does not get out of this locality within half
 an hour I'll blow him and the whole lot of you into pieces.
 Do you hear?"

"Then white man no surrender?"

"No!"

"White men all die!" warned the savage. "Long Arrow
 say so."

Back went the red truce-bearer.

A yell of derision and defiance went up from the savages
 as they listened to Frank's reply.

At once bullets began to fly.

The young inventor smiled grimly.

"We'll see!" he said.

He brought out a case of bombs and placed them by the

Then he said to Barney:

"Send the ship up five hundred feet."

"All roight, sor."

Up went the Breeze until it was right over the body
 of the Klamaths in the forest below.

Then Frank picked up a bomb, and going to the rail,
 it suspended for a moment.

Then he let it drop.

Down it fell and into the midst of the savage crew.

There was a terrific earthquake-like shock and explosion.

Aup into the air rose a heap of debris, shattered trees,
 rocks, earth, and the fragments of a score of mangled

Satan's. A literal mound many feet high was raised in the verge of
 the forest.

Then Frank dropped another and another of the terrible
 weapons.

Clash and blood could not endure against such dreadful
 destructive force.

The terrified Klamaths broke and fled.

As they spread through the wild forest the deadly
 weapons were at their heels.

Coming from the air in such a fashion, nothing could

be with such a destroying force. The savages were dis-
 comfited completely, and the attack upon Satan's Bend had

Frank said an ignominious defeat.

to say

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE RESCUE.

Frank was satisfied with simply dispersing the foe.

He would not indulge in useless slaughter, and the air-
 ship returned to the fort just as darkness was beginning
 to shut down.

The hunters were wild with glee.

They came out of the fort and thronged about the air-
 ship. They would have carried Frank on their shoulders
 if they could have done so.

"We'll never forgit ye!" declared Bill Black, earnestly.
 "Ye saved us; an' it's a dead sure thing."

The night passed without incident.

It was for a long time feared that the Klamaths might
 return.

But the electric searchlight prevented any possibility of
 a surprise, and they did not venture again to the attack.

Morning came at last. It was the morning of the sixth
 day, and Sharp said:

"We ought to expect the Prestons before long, hadn't we,
 Frank?"

"Certainly," replied the young inventor; "they should be
 here to-day."

The words had barely escaped his lips when Barney cried:

"Shure, sor, phwat's that?"

All looked in the direction indicated. From the forest
 an Indian had reeled forth.

His arms were uplifted. It was seen now that he was a
 half-breed.

"A messenger or a truce-bearer," cried Frank.

"He's not a Klamath!" shouted Bill Black. "I reckon
 he's an Assiniboine, an' I know him well. It's Crooked
 Feather, an' he's one of the slickest hunters in Athabaska."

"From Athabasca!" cried Sharp. "Perhaps he brings
 word from the Prestons."

"That's no doubt the size of it," agreed Black.

Straight up to the air-ship came Crooked Feather, the
 half-breed.

He was bleeding from a dozen wounds and could not
 speak; but he held up a roll of bark in his hand.

Frank took the roll of bark and unfolded it.

"Yes," he cried, joyfully. "It is from the Prestons.
 Here, Barney and Pomp, look out for this poor fellow. Give
 him food and drink and dress his wounds."

"What is the trouble, Frank?" asked Sharp, eagerly.

"Much!" replied the young inventor. "I will read the
 message."

DEAR MR. READE.—My son has brought me the joyful news that I am not guilty of an awful crime. It seems as if the darkened windows of my soul are opened and new, joyous light has come in. I cannot write more upon this subject now, but must tell you that we are in a desperate strait.

If Heaven permits the bearer of this, the poor half-breed, Crooked Feather, to reach you, you will know that we are surrounded by Klamath Indians, and are making a desperate fight for our lives. Come to our aid with your wonderful air-ship, if you can. Crooked Feather will pilot you. With everlasting gratitude,

ARTHUR PRESTON.

Frank handed the scroll of birch to Detective Sharp.

Then he said to Black:

"We must leave you for a time. I hardly think the Indians will return to the attack, but if they do, try and hang out until we return."

"You kin bet we will," replied the mayor of Satan's Bend.

Then Frank rushed below to see how Crooked Feather was.

The half-breed had recovered well from his faintness and was able to talk in broken English.

He told of the desperate strait of the hermit and his son, and described the locality where they were to be found.

"All right," said Frank. "We will go at once."

The air-ship instantly sprang into the air.

Crooked Feather sat in the pilot-house, and watching the country below, directed the course.

Over forests, mountains and plains the air-ship sped until darkness came. Then the course was followed more slowly with the searchlight.

Frank had some fears as to their being able to reach the hermit's abode in time.

But the air-ship groped along that night, and when morning came Crooked Feather pointed eagerly to a distant mountain range, and cried:

"There be place. White man there. Find heap Injun."

The region which now lay below baffles description.

All the fabled cliffs and defiles of Dante's Hades were undone. The black passes, mighty defiles and miles of jagged peaks were simply beyond description.

And right over this terrific bit of scenery the air-ship floated.

It was in the early morning light when suddenly those on deck beheld a startling scene below.

There upon the mountain side in the verge of spruce and cedars was a cabin. Two men stood by the door.

They were not looking up, but Frank grasped the telescope standard and shouted down to them. They instantly looked up and swung their hats.

One was a bearded man and the other a youth.

That they were father and son seemed certain. They were dressed in the typical buckskin garb of hunters.

"The Prestons!" cried Sharp. "It is them—father and son!"

"Hurrah!" shouted all.

Then Frank cried:

"Lower the ship, Barney!"

Down went the air-ship into the clearing. The two rushed to the rail.

Frank and the detective leaped down and shook hands with them.

Arthur Preston was strong, but his face was haggard and his eyes wild, like those of a man who has led a hard life for years.

"God only knows what is in my heart at this moment," he said to Frank. "I am once more happy."

"But we thought we were surrounded by savages?" asked Sharp.

"And we were," replied the hermit. "For two days we were besieged. But some motive impelled them to draw off, and we have not seen them since."

Then Harry Preston rushed to Crooked Feather's side.

"Brave fellow!" he said. "You have done nobly. You shall not be forgotten!"

Then all were asked into the hermit's quarters.

They were surprisingly neat and cozy, and there were many of the natural wonders of the region there stored.

The recluse entertained his visitors well, and then said:

"But—happy as I am, I shall not leave this place with a pang. It has been a pure and free and happy life for me. How shall I leave it?"

"But only think," cried Harry, "I am going to my father whose heart will be so gladdened to see us both!"

"True indeed," agreed the recluse. "Such joy I never dared hope to realize."

Preparations were made, however, to go aboard the air-ship.

Crooked Feather, however, could not be induced to go with them.

The primeval forests and the hunting grounds were his natural home, and he could not forsake them.

So Arthur Preston turned over to him the cabin and its furnishings and stores as a reward for his faithful service.

It was later in the day when the air-ship took leave of the spot.

Frank was disposed to stop a short while at Satan's Bend turning to civilization.

body demurred, and so the air-ship was held on that

the next morning Barney was the first to espy the little settlement down among the trees.

and even as he did so, smoke and flame were seen to leap the air, and a great cry went up.

"Great heavens!" cried Sharp. "The place is afire!"

The air-ship speedily hovered over the spot. The cause of the trouble was seen at once.

The Klamaths had returned to the attack full force.

They had even succeeded in firing a number of the cabins.

They would speedily get the upper hand seemed quite

ga.

"They mean to destroy Bill Black's settlement!" de-

clared Preston.

"But they'll never do it!" said Frank Reade, Jr., posi-

ly.

He went into the cabin, and came out with some of the

active bombs.

It was but a moment's work to drop one among the sav-

agorde. The result was instantaneous.

They hastily beat an incontinent retreat. This time,

Chief, Frank Reade, Jr., meant to make their defeat

y.

He followed the savage crew, sending bomb after

down upon them.

The destruction of life was enormous, and that day the

tribes received a blow from which they never recovered.

For he was fully satisfied that the savages had received

of a drubbing, Frank proceeded to descend into

for Satan's Bend.

The air-ship settled down once more into the heart of

the settlement, the ovation received was something

y.

The hunters all piled out of the fort, and yelled and

and wildly.

They surrounded the air-ship and its crew, and were vo-

ices in their expressions of delight.

Frank and his companions were quite overwhelmed by the

on.

Bill Black came on board, and wringing Frank's hand,

we

"We're goin' ter put up a monument to yew hyar as ther

that saved Satan's Bend. It was a jim-whooper fer

bet, an' ther Hudson's Bay Company will let us

now, I reckon."

"I hope so," said Frank, warmly, "and also that your town will grow and prosper. I wish you success."

There was nothing that the denizens of Satan's Bend were not willing to do for their visitors.

The day was spent there, and then, as reports were confirmed that the Klamaths had finally abandoned their attack and gone back to Athabasca, Frank said:

"I must carry Mr. Preston and his son to Chicago. They are anxious to return to their home in Baltimore."

"And then you will return to Readestown?" asked Felix Sharp.

"No," replied Frank; "I have not yet finished my exploration of this wonderful region. I shall return here from Chicago and penetrate as far north as Alaska. I mean to make a complete exploration of this part of North America."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CYCLONE.

Frank's hearers were deeply interested.

"Oh, how I would like to take the voyage with you, Frank," said Preston.

"Indeed, I would like to have you," said Frank.

"But I feel it my duty to go at once to my dear wife in Baltimore."

"So I thought," said Frank; "but perhaps you can go another time. Barney and Pomp will be my companions."

"I wish that I had not so many other important cases on hand," said Felix Sharp. "How I would like to go!"

"But if you leave us in Chicago, Frank, it will be all right," said Preston. "We can then proceed to Baltimore by rail."

"That is what I reckoned upon."

"It is all right."

"Then we will start at once."

Leave was taken of the denizens of Satan's Bend.

Bill Black was despondent.

"Don't ye fail to give us a call when ye return, Mister Reade," he said.

"Be sure of that," said Frank.

The air-ship then took flight.

Up over the tree tops she sailed, and the Satan's Bend people watched her out of sight regretfully.

Frank's work in the northwest had thus far proved a great success.

He intended to return and make a thorough exploration of the entire region, but before Chicago could be reached thrilling incidents were to be enacted.

For two days the air-ship kept on its southward way, and one morning the waters of a mighty lake burst upon their view.

It was Lake Winnipeg, and Frank cried:

"We shall make Fort Garry to-day, and to-morrow night we should reach Lake Superior."

This announcement was cheering indeed, and warmly received.

All rushed to the rail to take a look at the great lake which lay below them.

And as they did so there came a gust of wind which smote rather sharply on the blades of the rotascope. Frank involuntarily glanced at the horizon.

And as he did so a sharp cry escaped his lips.

It was a cry of alarm.

Preston and Sharp both noted it and cried:

"What's the matter, Frank?"

The young inventor's face was pale.

"Look!" he said.

He pointed to the southwest. There was a great cloud creeping up rapidly into the zenith.

It was a strange and wolfish-looking cloud, yellow and ragged. Its rapid course was a source of deep alarm.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Preston, "it is a cyclone!"

Not one in the party but knew the deadly peril which threatened them.

For the cyclone to strike the air-ship meant possible annihilation. What was to be done?

Two courses only there were.

One consisted in ascending above the storm, and the other in descending to some sheltered spot on the earth.

If the latter course was pursued there was, of course, the possibility of the blast divesting the air-ship of its rotascope, even though the lives of the voyagers were saved.

There was but a moment in which to make decision. Frank accepted the chance he deemed best.

This was to ascend above the storm.

Accordingly he put on all the speed of the rotascope. The air-ship shot upward.

Up it went until it became apparent that life was endangered in going further.

All gasped in the rarefied air, and blood even dripped from their nostrils.

Yet they did not seem above the storm.

Frank was overcome with horror.

"We are going to catch it!" he cried. "My God, it will be the end of us!"

To be struck by the storm at that awful altitude was certainly an appalling thing to consider.

There seemed little doubt but that the rotascope would be swept from the ship, and that it would then mean a frightful journey to the earth.

With pallid faces the voyagers looked at each other.

Already the first breath of the storm was making the air-ship rock heavily.

Frank accepted a desperate chance, and sent the air-ship up a little further.

But as he did so, Preston swooned and fell to the deck. Frank at once saw that it was of no use.

And therefore, if they were compelled to meet the storm the nearer to the earth they were the better.

So he shut off the rotascope and let the air-ship sink.

In a few moments they were in a better atmosphere. Preston revived, and Frank cried:

"I think we will be able to reach the earth. If the storm our lives will at least be saved."

Everybody hung to the rail of the air-ship as she was flying downward. Had a few seconds more been allowed she would certainly have reached the earth.

But as it was, the storm burst when they were yet a mile from the earth.

In an instant all was chaos.

What ensued in the next dozen or more minutes was a dream to the aerial voyagers.

The time was exceedingly brief, but it seemed an ages. The air-ship was lifted and hurled and whirled every way through space.

The yelling of ten thousand demons filled the ears of the affrighted voyagers.

They clung madly to the air-ship's rail. On and on they were hurled, whirled and revolved.

Then, after what seemed an interminable length of time the howling ceased, the motions of the air-ship were arrested and suddenly light broke upon them.

They came instantly out of darkness, and all were about them.

The scene which they beheld was thrilling indeed.

They seemed to be in a great cloud bank which was ringing on with thunderous reverberations into the east.

A cloudless sky was above. Below suddenly the earth unfolded itself.

All were yet on the air-ship's decks and clinging to the rail strongly.

But the air-ship itself presented a demoralized appearance.

It yet floated. The rotascope's shaft yet stood, and the remaining blades were sufficient to keep it from falling with force.

the power was not great enough to sustain it, and it sinking slowly down.

Frank Reade, Jr., was the first to recover.

He sprang up and to the rail.

A cry of horror escaped his lips.

"What is it, Frank?" asked Preston. "Is not the storm?"

"Yes," replied the young inventor; "but we are falling into the lake!"

"Falling into the lake?"

"Yes," replied the young inventor; "but we are falling into the lake!"

Frank rushed into the pilot-house. He pressed the propeller lever.

It was of no use. It would not work. The propeller blades were broken, and it was useless. The ship was certainly doomed to fall into the lake.

But this was not altogether the worst thing that could happen.

The breeze could float and even be navigated in the water. At least there would be no loss of life.

The aerial journey was at an end.

The wonderful trip into the Northwest had reached a sad and final conclusion. The famous air-ship was wrecked and could not be repaired.

Frank announced this fact, but Preston said:

"Don't see how that can be, Frank. Why can it not be repaired and the rotascope shaft repaired?"

"No," replied Frank; "there is no method of transporting the air-ship to Readestown, and certainly I could not find any mechanics here to repair her."

"What!" exclaimed Sharp, in surprise; "do you mean to say that you will abandon the air-ship here?"

"There is no other way," replied Frank.

"Indeed, this was true.

"I see, I can construct a new one cheaper than I can repair this one back to Readestown."

Frank would not help seeing the logic of this statement. But it seemed a pity to leave the beautiful triumph of genius in a desolate place.

The air-ship continued to sink rapidly, and now rested upon the bosom of Lake Winnipeg.

It floated like a duck, and as no injury had been done to the hull, there was no danger of its sinking.

A light was visible some miles away, and it was decided to go for it.

Frank repaired the propeller so that it would work. The rotascope was extended, and the electric engines were started.

The air-ship forged ahead at a good rate of speed.

It was as steady in the water as an ordinary boat, but

yet it held up well, and the shore momentarily drew nearer.

Soon the trees and objects on shore became more visible, and the air-ship finally entered a little cove.

It glided up to the shore and Frank beached it.

Anchors were thrown out, and all leaped out.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Sharp, "what a relief it seems to get on shore again! My legs feel unsteady."

All felt this way, and after a little fire had been made on the beach and their clothing dried the spirits of all revived.

Then the future was discussed.

Indeed, the outlook was a serious one. They were in the heart of a mighty wilderness, with nothing but their legs to depend upon for transportation back to civilization.

Of course all knew that a southerly course would take them to Manitoba.

But civilization was hundreds of miles away, and it would be necessary to tramp every mile of that distance.

"We can never carry provisions enough to last," declared Preston. "We will have to depend upon game before we get there."

"We may starve then," said Sharp, "unless there are better hunters in the party than I am."

"Here is Barney here," said Harry Preston, "and Pomp also. They are good hunters, and father and I have lived in the wilderness quite long enough, I think."

"I have no doubt we shall succeed," said Frank; "but it will be a weary tramp, and many days before it is finished."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

"But if we have got to make it," said Preston, "let us lose no time about it, but go at once."

"Amen!" said the detective.

Accordingly the air-ship was drawn high up on the shore and work was begun removing the stores.

Litters were made for carrying these, and only such effects were taken as were extremely necessary, and which would not impede the long march.

Then the party were all ready to set out, when suddenly from the bushes there stepped a tall man in the garb of a hunter.

He carried a rifle, and had all the appearance of an old-time trapper.

He waved his hand in token of recognition, and cried:

"Wall, I'll be gol durned! Whar did yew greenhorns cum from, anyway?"

"Hello!" shouted Preston, "is that you, Big Rube?"

"Wall, I'll be blowed if it ain't Preston the Hermit!" cried the big trapper. "Durned glad to see yer!"

"The same to you, Rube."

"Whar yer goin'?"

"Back to civilization."

"What! Ye ain't goin' to leave ther woods?"

"Yes, I am. I have been in a measure happy here, Rube, but there is greater happiness in store for me, for my old home is restored to me."

Big Rube, the trapper, speedily made the acquaintance of the others, and then, as he learned of their projected route to Manitoba, said:

"Pshaw! What are yer thinkin' of? Why don't yer take ther water way?"

"There is no water way."

"Yes; thar is."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, yew kin jest keep on daown this lake tew ther end. Then if you kin portage for a few miles at a time yew kin cross from a chain of rivers to lakes an' work right daown into Manitoba."

This was joyful news. Old Rube was hailed as a savior.

"Be beavers, I'll go with ye fer a plug of tobaccer," he said, facetiously. "I ain't been daown to Manitoba fer years, an' I kin make it, I guess, an' git back in time fer trappin'."

Rube's offer was joyfully accepted.

Back aboard the Breeze the party went, and the start down the lake was made.

Day after day the Breeze forged ahead through the lake waters. Then came a period of portage. Luckily the air-ship was so extremely light that it was transferred without any very great difficulty.

At last Manitoba was reached.

Here the party took leave of their guide, Big Rube, who went back to the primeval forests.

Then all started for home. The end of the great journey had been reached. The trip to the great Northwest had in a certain sense been a success.

The two Prestons, father and son, had been found.

"I am sorry you have sacrificed your air-ship for us, Mr. Reade," said Preston senior; "but I am rich, and you shall be reimbursed for it."

"Not a bit of it," said Frank. "I can stand the loss, and I shall at once begin work upon another and a better one."

Then the party separated to go to their respective homes. The Prestons, father and son, went back to a happy union in Baltimore, where the mother and wife joined them. There they happily abide to-day.

Felix Sharp was richly rewarded.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp returned to town. And true to his word the young inventor at once began work upon a new invention, of which we shall hear some future day.

THE END.

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